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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the rural depopulation process in Great Britain over the last 20 years is examined. The causes and consequences of rural depopulation were examined in 4 fairly typical rural communities; these 4 communities and their present populations are (1) the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, 283,000; (2) Mid-Wales, 174,000; (3) North Norfolk in Eastern England, 29,000; and (4) North Mayo in Western Ireland, 32,000. All of these communities have registered a decline in population during the last 20 years, with the Scottish area showing some recovery during the last 10 years. This paper also examines economic and social factors associated with migration in North Norfolk. Findings suggest that the considerable realignment of the structure and organization of agriculture is the basis for migration from these areas. Other possible reasons for migration include entry into an occupation other than agriculture, individual levels of occupational aspiration, and degree of satisfaction with the local community. The consequences of depopulation include unbalanced age structures and sex ratios in the rural population and a decline in demand of such services as public transportation; considered a most serious consequence, the effects become causes in themselves. Data are presented in tabular form. (NQ)

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CASE STUDIES OF DECLINING COMMUNITIES.

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Department of Land Economy

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Paper to Third World Congress for Rural Sociology

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Introduction

The movement of population to urban areas is not a new phenomenon in Britain. Rural depopulation has been a demographic reality for more than 120 years. The overall population of England and Wales increased from 18 millions in 1851 to 44 millions in 1951. However, in 1851 the proportion was 50 per cent urban and 50 per cent rural while in 1951 it was 81 per cent urban and 19 per cent rural.

Since early in the present century the question of exodus of population from rural areas has received considerable attention. In 1914, A.L. Bowley published his pioneering study in the Statistical Journal.[1] He showed that the only rural counties which increased in population between 1861 and 1911 were Sussex, Kent and Surrey because of their closeness to London, Cheshire and Worcester because of proximity to industrial centres and Flint and Caernarvon because of mining developments.

In the twenties and thirties, the debate on rural decline continued and reached its culmination in the early 1940's with the setting up of a Government Committee to examine and report on the problems of rural communities. That Committee published what is now known as the Scott Report.[2] This Report adopted a rather preservationist view of rural areas and its recommendations were preservationist rather than developmental. Agriculture was regarded as having the almost sole right to land in rural areas and it was suggested that industrialisation was desirable only to a limited degree.

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A comprehensive study by Saville showed that the depopulation of rural areas had not abated, as was thought to be the case, by the 1950's.[3] Saville illustrated his point with the counties of Rutland and Warwickshire. Rutland increased in population until 1850 but since then it had shown decline.

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1 Bowley A.L., "Rural Population in England and Wales, A Study of the Changes of Density, Occupations and Ages", Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Vol. LXXVII, May 1914, pp. 597-645.

2 Report of the Committee on Land Utilization in Rural Areas, under the Chairmanship of Sir Leslie Scott, Cmnd 6378, H.M.S.O., London, 1942.

3 Saville J., Rural Depopulation in England and Wales 1851-1951, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957.

All parishes with a population of less than 1000 had declined sharply and this decline was continuing. In the case of Warwickshire, an industrial county around Birmingham, total population had increased sharply since 1850 but the more remote parishes and particularly those with populations of less than 500 had again declined. Saville concluded that rural depopulation in England and Wales had continued as far as the remoter rural areas and smaller villages were concerned.[1]

During the period 1951 to 1971 the proportion of the population living in rural areas increased from 19 per cent to 22 per cent. This change might be taken to be an indication of stabilisation or even reverse in the rural-urban drift but closer examination does not confirm this. Many places classified as rural areas for Census purposes are on the fringes of urban areas and it is in these areas that the main population increases have taken place.[2] In fact, the predominantly agricultural counties and remoter areas continued to lose population between 1951 and 1971. Rural depopulation has operated in similar areas in Scotland and Ireland although both of these countries have become better known for their large-scale emigration. In the present paper, the depopulation process is examined in one rural community each from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland over the last 20 year period.

The Selected Rural Communities[3]

The four communities examined are the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Mid-Wales, North Norfolk in Eastern England and North Mayo in Western Ireland. The Scottish area comprises the counties of Caithness, Argyll, Ross and Cromarty,

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1 Saville J., op. cit., pp. 73-88.

2 See Lind H., "Internal Migration in Britain", in Jackson J.A. (Ed.), Migration, The University Press, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 80-82 for discussion on this point.

3 In this paper we follow the definition of "community" given by Parsons, because of its spatial and geographical connotations, i.e. "A community is that collectivity the members of which have a common territorial area as their base of operations for daily activities". See Talcott Parsons, The Social System, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1967, p. 91. The rural-urban dichotomy is now meaningless to some extent. For our purposes, the term 'rural community' embraces a geographical region where agriculture is pursued on the main land area and where there is no large urban complex, but rather a number of small market towns and villages.

Inverness, Orkney, Sutherland and Shetland and has a population of about 283,000. The main urban area is Inverness with a population of around 30,000. The region is mainly a mountainous one and sheep is the most important farm enterprise with cattle as a subsidiary in some areas. About 80 per cent of all holdings (or crofts as they are termed) are less than 30 acres in size.

Mid-Wales includes the counties of Cardigan, Merioneth, part of Breconshire, Montgomery and Radnorshire and has a total population of about 174,000. The largest town is Aberystwyth with a population of 10,000. This area is also a mountainous one and sheep is also the predominant farm enterprise although cattle production is more important in some lowland areas. About 33 per cent of the holdings are under 30 acres. North Mayo and North Norfolk contrast with the above areas in land area, population size and farming type. North Mayo has a total population of almost 32,000, the main town having 6000 persons. The main population is accommodated in small villages or on single farms. Like the two larger communities, this area is predominantly a livestock one but the main enterprises here are cattle production and dairy farming. There is little emphasis on cereals or root crops. Almost 70 per cent of the holdings are under 30 acres.

North Norfolk has a total population of about 29,000. The largest town has 4,000 population with two others at the 2,000 level. The remaining population live in settlements under 300 population or on single farms throughout the countryside. In contrast to the other communities, the area is one of rich arable farming, the major crops being barley, wheat and sugar beet. Agriculture is also more highly mechanized than in any of the other areas. Although some 40 per cent of the farms are under 30 acres the main acreage and production is accounted for by 15 per cent which are over 500 acres. Like the other areas, agriculture is the predominant occupation, 33 per cent of the employed population

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The pattern of population change over the period 1951-1971 is now considered for each of the above areas and material collected in the North Norfolk community is used to examine a number of hypotheses relating to migration.

Population Change in Selected Communities 1951-1971.

In Table I population figures are presented for each intercensal period from 1951 to 1971 for the areas under study.

Table I Population change in selected communities 1951-1971.

Area	1951	1961	1971	Actual Change 1951 - 1971	% Change 1951 - 1971
Highlands & Islands of Scotland	285,786	277,948	282,901	-2885	-1.0
Mid-Wales	185,729	178,546	174,089	-11,640	-6.3
North Norfolk	35,518	32,141	29,385	-6,133	-17.3
North Mayo	40,030	35,126	31,638	-8,392	-20.9

Sources: Censuses of Population.

All areas have registered a decline during the period under review, although the Scottish area did show some recovery during the last ten years. The statistics for both Scotland and Mid-Wales as presented here conceal a number of wide inter-county variations. A decline of 1.0 per cent would appear to be a tolerable figure for the Scottish area as a whole but this is accounted for solely by an increase of 22.2 per cent in Caithness and 5.4 per cent in Inverness. In fact the other 5 counties in the area recorded declines ranging from 3.7 per cent for Ross and Cromarty to 19.7 per cent for Orkney. In the Mid-Wales area, the only county to record an increase was Cardiganshire (2.9 per cent) and this was due almost entirely to the growth of Aberystwyth and its hinterland. All the other counties registered declines ranging from 7.0 per cent for Montgomeryshire to 14.9 per cent for Merionethshire. Such inter-county variation is one argument for examining smaller statistical units such as North Norfolk where the true trends are more clearly discernible.

The Determinants of Migration.

One of the first attempts at formulating a theory of migration was that of Ravenstein on "The Laws of Migration".[1] These 'laws' postulated demographic and economic variables especially in relation to the distance factor. However, [illegible] that both the causes of migration and the personal

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The Determinants of Migration.

One of the first attempts at formulating a theory of migration was that of Ravenstein on "The Laws of Migration".[1] These 'laws' postulated demographic and economic variables especially in relation to the distance factor. However, it has since become evident that both the causes of migration and the personal characteristics of migrants vary considerably from place to place and from time to time. In an essay on internal migration Bogue observes that "one of the most important findings of empirical research on internal migration to date is that, like so many other events in the realm of human behaviour, there are no "laws" of migration..... When an individual person or family

1 Ravenstein E.G., "The Laws of Migration", Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Vol. XLIII, June 1885, pp. 167-227.

changes residence, the move is made for certain reasons, and the destination of the move is selected for the same and other reasons. These reasons may be looked upon as objective situations or as subjective responses to prejudices or values of which the persons involved may not be aware; reasons for migration are not necessarily known to the migrant, and his rationalization of his move may not be valid or logical".[1] At the same time, a number of general factors can be said to motivate migrants. Beyer[2] divides this motivation into four categories as follows:

(1) ambition, for better job opportunities;

(2) hope, for a better future for the children;

(3) courage, for a beginning or a zest of adventure; and

(4) better economic opportunities.

Beijer repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the economic factor. Indeed the vast majority of studies concerning the motivation of migrants in Europe and the United States stress the great importance of economic and social mobility motives in migration.[3]

For the purposes of this paper, we examine factors associated with migration in the North Norfolk survey area under two main headings - economic factors and social factors:

Economic Factors.

Major changes have taken place in agricultural production in North Norfolk over the last 20 years. These changes have been observed in rural areas across England, and it is common to find that the number of workers in agriculture today are less than 40 per cent of the numbers so employed in 1950. The

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1 Bogue D.J., "Internal Migration" in Hauser P.M., and Duncan D.T. (Eds). The Study of Population, The University of Chicago Press, 1959, p. 499.

2 Beijer G., "Modern Patterns of International Migratory Movements", in Jackson J.A. (Ed.). Migration, Cambridge University Press, 1969, pp. 11-59.

3 See for example Rural Migration, Papers and Proceedings of the First Congress of the European Society for Rural Sociology, Bonn, 1959.
Geographic and Occupational Mobility of Rural Manpower, Documentation in Agriculture and Food, Report No. 75, O.E.C.D., 1964.
Hannan D.F., Rural Exodus, Geoffrey Chapman, London and Dublin, 1970.

greatest single cause has been the adoption of new technology in agricultural production, along with streamlined farming systems, which have reduced together the demand for manual labour.

For the area under study, the most significant new technologies have been the introduction of large combine harvesters, mechanisation of the sugar-beet crop and the use of herbicides to control weed infestation. Together with simpler farming systems, which have allowed the farmer to concentrate his capital, managerial ability and labour force on a much smaller range of products, these have led to a dependence on cereals and sugar-beet, whose labour demands are now complementary, at the expense of grassland pastoral stock.

The grass acreage in the area has dropped by over one-third in the ten years from 1958 to 1968 and the number of cattle by nearly one quarter in the same period. Dairy cattle, which form the bulk of these numbers, are very labour intensive, and require supervision daily, even at weekends so that with the existence of profitable alternatives, it is not surprising that numbers have declined, and with them the demand for labour.

Indeed, on particular farms it is not always easy to decide whether the decision to drop cattle was an <u>active</u> managerial response arising from the high opportunity costs and the availability of other systems, or a <u>passive</u> one resulting from the sudden departure of the cow-man and the great difficulty of getting a suitable replacement. In many cases it is likely to be the latter but it is very probable that the farmer was contemplating this decision, and the exodus of the cow-man has been the catalyst that has initiated the change.

In any case, the process has resulted in a decline in the farm labour force in the survey area. During the period 1960-1968 the total number employed in agriculture dropped by 899 or 24.7 per cent. In the same period an increase of 457 jobs took place in manufacturing employment but this was counteracted to a large extent by a decline in service and miscellaneous employment. The increase in employment other than in agriculture was only

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A survey carried out on 153 farms in the study area during 1970/71 helps further to illustrate the importance of the economic factor in migration

behaviour. Details were obtained on all workers leaving the farms during the period 1960–1970, whether they migrated or not and the occupations they entered on leaving.[1] An attempt is made in Tables II and III to outline the actual pattern of movement and its relationship to subsequent employment of the workers. Of the active workers, a total of 118 or 25 per cent left the area entirely. See Table II. This is a high percentage decline when compared to a total population decline of 17.3 per cent recorded for the area during 1951–1971.

Table II. Migratory Patterns and Subsequent Employment of Active Workers.[a]

Occupation taken	Number Remaining	% of Total Remaining	Number Migrating	% of Total Migrating	Total	% of Total
Agriculture	192	54.2	43	36.5	235	49.8
General Labourer	27	7.6	4	3.4	31	6.6
Industrial Employment	42	11.9	27	22.9	69	14.6
Driving	19	5.4	15	12.7	34	7.2
Building Industry	19	5.4	5	4.2	24	5.1
Unemployed	28	7.9	1	0.8	29	6.1
Other Occupations[b]	27	7.6	23	19.5	50	10.6
Total	354	100.0	118	100.0	472	100.0

[a]Retired workers omitted.

[b]The 'other' category includes such jobs as army, navy, airforce, retail electrical and distribution trades.

If we disregard the unemployed workers it can be shown that there is a close relationship between migration and subsequent employment type. See Table III.

Table III. Migration and Subsequent Employment of Employed Workers.

	Number Remaining	% of Total Remaining	Number Migrating	% of Total Migrating	Total	% of Total
Agriculture	192	58.9	43	36.8	235	53.1
Employment other than Agriculture	134	41.1	74	63.2	208	46.9

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Total	326	100.0	117	100.0	443	100.0

It appears that if one remains in the survey area the chances of becoming employed outside agriculture are much smaller. For example, of those who

1 These details were given as accurately as possible by each farmer interviewed and not by the workers who would be very difficult to trace.

remained in the area 58.9 per cent took an agricultural job. This of course may merely reflect the fact that those workers wished to stay in agriculture but it also emphasizes the fact mentioned earlier that little other employment is available locally. When workers leave the area a smaller proportion (36.8 per cent) enter agriculture and a larger proportion (63.2 per cent) enter employment other than agriculture. This differential is particularly marked in the case of the 'industrial' and 'other' employment categories. (See Table II). In short, these figures indicate that if a worker wishes to enter a job other than agriculture, he would have a much better chance of obtaining it if he left the area.

The foregoing section has examined the actual migratory pattern of one sector of rural society and the hypothesis that migration is related to entry to a non-agricultural job is accepted.

A further survey attempted to assess the propensity to migrate of young people who had not yet entered the work force but were on the point of doing so. Here, it is hypothesized that in the case of school-leavers, migration decision-making is related to level of occupational aspiration. This survey covered 392 respondents (189 females and 203 males) from 9 post-primary schools catering for the survey area. Table IV indicates that 23.5 per cent of the respondents intended to migrate, 30.8 per cent were undecided, while 45.7 per cent intended to remain in the local community.

Table IV. Migratory Intentions and Occupational Aspirations of Post-Primary School-Leavers in North Norfolk (N = 392).

Occupational Aspiration *	Remain	Undecided	Migrate	Total
High	43 (31.4)	51 (37.2)	43 (31.4)	137 (100.0)
Medium	93 (51.7)	48 (26.7)	39 (21.6)	180 (100.0)
	40	21	9	70

per cent) enter agriculture and a larger proportion (63.2 per cent) enter employment other than agriculture. This differential is particularly marked in the case of the 'industrial' and 'other' employment categories. (See Table II). In short, these figures indicate that if a worker wishes to enter a job other than agriculture, he would have a much better chance of obtaining it if he left the area.

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Medium	93 (51.7)	48 (26.7)	39 (21.6)	180 (100.0)
Low	40 (57.1)	21 (30.0)	9 (12.9)	70 (100.0)
Don't know	3	1	1	5
Total	179 (45.7)	121 (30.8)	92 (23.5)	392 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 19.6$ Significant at .01 level.

*The classification of occupations is that used by the Register General. See Classification of Occupations 1970, H.M.S.O. London. Five categories were used: I-Professional, II-Intermediate, III-Skilled (manual and non-manual), IV-Partly-skilled, V-Unskilled. Categories I & II constitute a "High" aspiration, category III a medium aspiration, and IV & V a low aspiration.

The selective nature of migration is well exemplified in the above data: the lower the occupational aspiration, the more likely is one to remain; the higher the occupational aspiration, the greater is the tendency to migrate. Of those with low job aspirations, 57.1 per cent hope to remain, while only 31.4 per cent of the high aspirants wish to do so. In the case of the low aspirants only 12.9 per cent plan to migrate, but 31.4 per cent of the high aspirants wish to do so. The hypothesis that migration decision-making is related to level of occupational aspiration, must be accepted. As educational facilities improve this tendency is likely to be emphasized even more and as the opportunities to achieve high occupational aspirations are extremely limited in the area under study migration must become a necessity for the greater proportion of the school-leaver population.

Social Factors.

A number of social factors determining migration are now considered. Under this heading it is hypothesized that satisfaction with the local community is inversely related to the intention to migrate. In order to measure community attachment the respondents were asked to reply to a variety of 8 statements according to degree of agreement ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".* These were scored 4,3,2,1,0 on a positive (+) item and 0,1,2,3,4 on a negative item so that a high score indicated high community attachment. The results of this exercise are set out in Table V.

Table V. Level of Community Attachment and its relationship to Migratory Decisions.

Community Attachment Level	Decision to Remain	Undecided	Decision to Leave	Total
Low	3 (5.6)	19 (35.9)	31 (58.5)	53 (100.0)
Medium	113 (42.5)	93 (34.9)	60 (22.6)	266 (100.0)
High	63 (86.3)	9 (12.3)	1 (1.4)	73 (100.0)

31.4 per cent of the high aspirants wish to do so. In the case of the low aspirants only 12.9 per cent plan to migrate, but 31.4 per cent of the high aspirants wish to do so. The hypothesis that migration decision-making is related to level of occupational aspiration, must be accepted. As educational facilities improve this tendency is likely to be emphasized even more and as the opportunities to achieve high occupational aspirations are extremely limited in the area under study migration must become a necessity for the greater proportion of the school-leaver population.

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Medium	113 (42.5)	93 (34.9)	60 (22.6)	266 (100.0)
High	63 (86.3)	9 (12.3)	1 (1.4)	73 (100.0)
Total	179 (45.6)	121 (30.9)	92 (23.5)	392 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 98.8$ Significant at .01 level

*In selecting the statements the authors have been guided by Johnson and Knop. "Rural-Urban Differentials in Community Satisfaction" Rural Sociology Vol.35, 1970 pp. 544-548. The pioneer of the C.S. scale was Vernon Davies - See "The Development of a Scale to rate Attitudes of Community Satisfaction, Rural Sociology, Vol. 10, 1945, pp. 246-265.

It is clear that there is a close association between level of CS and decision to migrate. The relationship is an inverse one and the hypothesis is accepted. 86.3 per cent of those with high CS level plan to remain, while only 1.4 per cent intend to migrate. On the other hand, 5.6 per cent of those with low CS level plan to remain, while 58.5 per cent plan to move out. A large proportion recorded only a medium CS level but still the majority of these wished to remain in the home community. The CS variable is therefore an important one if it is desired to retain young people in rural communities.

One aspect which might be expected to influence the levels of community satisfaction is the provision of social and household amenities such as water supplies and sewage schemes. An overiding problem for authorities in a scattered rural area is the high cost of provision of these amenities, and the relatively high unit cost of maintaining them once they are provided. Under various central government orders since 1945, authorities have attempted to bring mains water supplies and some form of sewage disposal, to most settlements in their areas. However, it would appear that their success in the survey area has been quite small so far. The 1966 Census records that in the North Norfolk study area 32 per cent of houses have no hot water tap, compared with an average figure of 12 per cent for the country as a whole. Similarly 34 per cent had no bath, and 22 per cent no water closet, while the respective figures for the country are 15 per cent and 2 per cent. Therefore, it can be said that if these facilities are taken as indicators of social amenity provision the area is disadvantaged, compared with the general picture of the whole country, and especially so where sewage is concerned.

It can be argued that this shortfall does influence people, especially the young, who are perhaps considering migration in any case. The lack of these facilities serves to mark the area as a 'backward' one, and when taken with other disadvantages, especially the lack of suitable job opportunities,

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It can be argued that this shortfall does influence people, especially the young, who are perhaps considering migration in any case. The lack of these facilities serves to mark the area as a 'backward' one, and when taken with other disadvantages, especially the lack of suitable job opportunities, may re-inforce the possible decision to leave.

The Consequences of Rural Depopulation.

The previous section considered selected factors influencing migration behaviour. The consequences of the population decline are several. One major effect is that a considerable alteration takes place in the age structure of the remaining population. Migration tends to be a selective process, not only in regard to occupational aspiration level as shown earlier, but also in regard to the age of migrants. It is generally the young working age-cohort

who leave and a community of very young and ageing members is left behind. The age structure of the four communities under study is compared to that of England and Wales in Table 6.

Table 6. Percentage Age Distribution of the Population in England & Wales and selected rural communities, 1966.

Age group	England & Wales	Highlands & Islands	Mid-Wales	North Norfolk	North Mayo
0 -14	23.0	24.5	22.1	24.1	31.6
15-24	14.5	12.5	13.6	14.2	15.3
25-44	25.0	23.1	22.9	23.2	17.9
45-64	25.1	25.0	26.2	24.2	21.7
65+	12.4	14.9	15.2	14.3	13.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Dependent groups	35.4	39.4	37.3	38.4	45.1
Active groups	64.6	60.6	62.7	61.6	54.9

The rural community figures differ fairly considerably from the national pattern, having more in the dependent and less in the active age groups. The continuance of this trend has obvious implications for the future viability of such communities.

Population decline has also the effect of changing the sex ratio (i.e. females per 100 males) particularly in the young unmarried age groups. The sex ratio in the single more active groups are compared to England and Wales in Table 7.

Table 7. Sex Ratios of the Single Population (15-44) in Selected Areas, 1966.

Age group	England & Wales	Highlands & Islands	Mid-Wales	North Norfolk	North Mayo

	& Wales	Islands			
0 -14	23.0	24.5	22.1	24.1	31.6
15-24	14.5	12.5	13.6	14.2	15.3
25-44	25.0	23.1	22.9	23.2	17.9
45-64	25.1	25.0	26.2	24.2	21.7
65+	12.4	14.9	15.2	14.3	13.5
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Table 7. Sex Ratios of the Single Population (15-44) in Selected Areas, 1966.

Age group	England & Wales	Highlands & Islands	Mid-Wales	North Norfolk	North Mayo
15-19	90.7	86.4	93.3	56.8	86.0
20-24	61.4	62.4	54.9	48.1	55.8
25-29	50.2	54.1	46.6	40.0	48.9
30-34	58.8	63.7	49.3	30.0	35.2
35-39	67.2	63.3	42.1	42.9	39.3
40-44	80.1	91.9	64.7	36.4	40.1
Total (15-44)	75.0	73.7	68.9	49.7	62.9

There are fewer females than males in the 15-44 single age groups for the population as a whole but the rural communities, especially North Norfolk show a much greater imbalance in all age groups. Again, the statistics for the Scottish and Mid-Wales areas conceal high inter-county variations. For example, the county of Sutherland has sex ratios of 46.1 and 42.9 in the age groups 20-24 and 25-29 respectively compared with figures of 62.4 and 54.1 for the Highland area as a whole. Similarly, the Mid-Wales area conceals inter-county imbalances especially in the counties of Radnorshire and Breconshire.

The foregoing has illustrated the effects depopulation has had on the age structure and sex ratios of the communities under examination. It will of course be understood that the effects of population exodus may in turn be causal agents in a self-perpetuating vicious circle of decline. For example, when a community loses population there is less demand for basic services such as shops, restaurants, hotels and so on. As a result people employed in such services experience a contraction in job opportunities which forces them to leave the area. The decline in job opportunities and services in turn induces further migration. Similarly, when the age structure or sex ratio is unbalanced, the community in question becomes known as a residual and decaying one. Consequently, factors which were once effects become causes of the depopulation. Eventually, for economic reasons private agencies and even local government authorities find it necessary to curtail their economic committment to such areas in the form of water supplies, sewage disposal, road improvement and services in general. One striking example is public transport. For example, in the North Norfolk area all train services have now been withdrawn and the bus companies may soon do likewise due to a decline in demand.

Conclusions.

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Conclusions.

This paper set out to examine the causes and consequences of rural depopulation in a number of fairly typical rural communities. The North Norfolk community of Eastern England was adopted as a field study area and some results of two surveys carried out there were presented.

It is suggested that the considerable re-alignment of the structure and organisation of agriculture is the basis of migration from the survey area. A survey carried out on 153 farms supports the hypothesis that entry to an occupation other than agriculture is closely associated with migration.

Two hypotheses were also formulated in relation to 392 school-leavers. Firstly, it was hypothesized that migration decision-making was related to level of occupational aspiration. This was accepted. Secondly, it was hypothesized that satisfaction with the local community was inversely related to the intention to migrate. This was also accepted. Therefore, the apparent reluctance of alternative employment to base itself in rural areas leads to occupational frustration. Coupled with increased mobility on the part of the rural population and dissatisfaction with social facilities and amenities a continuous decline in total population has been inevitable.

The effects have been several. The movement has resulted in unbalanced age structures and sex ratios in the rural population. A decline in demand has rendered such services as public transport uneconomical and has resulted in the complete closure of rail services in the Norfolk community. Probably the most serious result of depopulation is that in turn the effects of it eventually become causes in an unending vicious circle.

It is not within the scope of this paper to consider what might be done to stop or reverse depopulation trends or whether such a policy is worthwhile at all. The writers have argued elsewhere on social and economic grounds for a rural development policy and suggested broad outlines for a development programme.[1] However, it is only fair to say that until more detailed cost-benefit estimates of alternative strategies for rural areas are available, neither government authorities nor private agencies will have a firm basis for locating economic activity there. Such estimates should be a high research priority. What is certain is that the process of rural depopulation is continuing and self-perpetrating.

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1 Drudy P.J. and Wallace D.B., "Towards a Development Programme for Remote Rural Areas: A Case Study in North Norfolk", Regional Studies, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1971, pp. 281-288.